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mothers' pension laws was originally left to the initiative of local officials have frequently found it desirable to amend laws so as to make appropriations mandatory instead of permissive, and to supply some form of assistance or supervisory authority by the state, in order to carry out the intent of the laws.

The question of effective administration of mothers' pensions has been well summarized in the Standards agreed upon by the Conference on Child Welfare held under the auspices of the Federal Children's Bureau in 1919:

The policy of assistance to mothers who are competent to care for their own children is now well established. It is generally recognized that the amount provided should be sufficient to enable the mother to maintain her children suitably in her own home, without resorting to such outside employment as will necessitate leaving her children without proper care and oversight; but in many states the allowances are still entirely inadequate to secure this result under present living costs. The amount required can be determined only by careful and competent case study, which must be renewed from time to time to meet changing conditions.

Foster Home Standards for Socially Handicapped Children

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ONE of the most potent factors in creating foster home standards is a belief that the socially handicapped child should be given every chance to realize his fullest development; that his needs are fundamentally no different from those of other children and should be honestly met. Such a belief, the sort that translates itself into action, should permeate the whole staff of a children's organization and, particularly, the board of directors, for their position gives them the final say in determining policies. Board members, who in accepting their positions have voluntarily assumed the responsibility of intelligent parenthood, must uphold their children's rights in the midst of communities that so readily forget the defenselessness of childhood and value dollars and cents far above human life. Theirs is the privilege of bringing to the community an appreciation of the real value of a child's life and helping that

community to transmute more and more of its gold into possibilities for the development of its childhood, that these children, so badly handicapped through loss of home and the fostering care of parents, may have the opportunity to grow into self-respecting members of society.

RESPONSIBILITY OF BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Modern psychology teaches that what we do is, after all, what we really believe. A few years ago a certain children's organization published in its annual report the statement that its equipment had become such that all of the children in its care were "now" receiving "personal consideration" and being fitted into carefully selected homes; but it neglected to state in this connection that its board of directors was requiring the visitors to care for from 130 to 160 children each. If by personal consideration they meant

knowing the personalities of 130 or more pre-adolescent boys and girls, the personnel of the different families in which these same children were placed and the history of the families out of which they came, all of which is essential to individual treatment or "personal consideration," they simply did not believe what they were saying. To ask one limited human being to know 130 or 160 children so completely as to render individual treatment to each, is to play the prank of the mad Hatter in asking Alice to have some wine. "I don't see any," said Alice. "There isn't any," said the Hatter.

No board with even a slight responsibility for its task could possibly tolerate the huge degree of child labor to which these placed-out children are subjected, creating and underwriting in the minds of the community the thought that the dependent child should be grateful even for the chance to labor; nor would the physical and moral neglect of children after placement be so prevalent if the board of directors believed that these children had anything like the same claim to human treatment as their own boys and girls.

A case in point is that of a farmer's wife who was asked by the directors of a small institution to take twenty-nine boys and girls of varying ages for the summer vacation. She requested that the directors provide an attendant who could be with the children during the day, as with her household tasks she could see little of them other than at meal times. Her request was refused. Because of the indifference of the directors she assumed a similar attitude and considered it no concern of hers when the older boys and girls went into the woods each morning after breakfast, staying away until the noon hour and repeating the same pro-

cedure in the afternoon. The board may have held the farmer's wife responsible for supplying an attendant, but if so, did not see to it that she secured one. This happened as recently as the summer of 1920.

KNOWING THE CHILD

The board that establishes a policy of justice toward its children will see in each child a human individual to be treated as such and will provide conditions that will contribute to his best development. To consider the child in the light of a human individual one needs to know who and what he is and, in transferring him to a strange home, to see him first against the background of his own home and family surroundings. One must have detailed information that will give a fine comprehension of the stock from which he comes, the soil in which he has been growing, the kind of human plant into which he is developing and the reasons why he needs to be transplanted. All of this knowledge is positively essential before the one can attempt to arrange for the child's future. The diagnosis for treatment, as it were, must be made upon a generous body of facts covering the life of the child and his family.

KNOWING THE HOME

The foster home plays an integral part in treatment and, as the urge to give individual treatment leads to the necessity of thoroughly knowing the child before any plan can be made, just so does it become essential to know many facts about a prospective foster home before one can wisely interpret the type of work for which it is best fitted or before any choice can be made for a special home for a special child. This choice should be made regardless of the class in society from which the home may come, for the

home must be considered only in the light of its fitness for the task. With the enlightened organization, the day is past when any child is placed in the foster family solely as a therapeutic agent.

An organization, by virtue of thoroughly knowing each child before placement, creates its own demand for thoroughly investigated homes. It can use no others. Out of its desire for justice it just naturally cannot make a practice of placing its children in partially investigated homes to complete the investigation through the child's experience with the family. Could any better method be devised for atrophying those qualities in a child, which should later blossom into self-respecting citizenship, than to pass him from one poorly investigated home to another, transferring him because after each placement something undesirable was learned about the family—something undesirable that should and could have been learned before any child ever stepped across its threshold? To let him experience an ugly temper that relieves itself at the expense of the child, a mean disposition that begrudges the child a real place in the family life, tolerating him merely for the work he could do, under-nourishment or a bad moral background? Yet, over and over again, the crust of an investigation is merely broken through just wide enough to shove in a child and he, in reality, becomes the investigating agent. The heavy toll which the delinquent group claims from the ranks of dependent children compelled to lead this "tramp life" is nothing short of appalling.

REAL AND COMPLETE EVIDENCE NEEDED

In seeking to establish the correct evaluation of a prospective foster home one cannot, out of justice to

someone else's child, rely solely upon his own estimate of the family, their home life, or their place in the community. However good his judgment may be in the interpretation of people and situations, a few hours contact with one or two members of the family can hardly reveal enough of the truth to enable him to feel sure that the family as a whole is worth-while material. He must seek the judgment of those who have known the family at close range over a longer period and out of their experience gain additional facts upon which to base the final judgment.

It is the person who has wintered and summered the family, and only he, who can give real evidence as to their moral fibre, or thoroughly comprehend the relations existing in the home between man and wife, the degree of responsibility each is showing toward the home and children, and what would seem to be the purpose underlying their desire to take another child into their midst. Have they a sympathetic understanding of a child's needs and, if there are other adults in the family, what is likely to be their attitude? It is quite possible for someone not holding any place in the making of family decisions to create an atmosphere that reacts most unfavorably upon the child's happiness. Then there are the health conditions of the family and the question of their disposition and temperament. Are they temperamentally fitted for the care of children; what has been the care and training of their own or any children for whom they have been responsible; what is their native intelligence, the grade of house-keeping that holds throughout the year, their financial condition, the way in which they spend their leisure time, their interests and standing in the community?

One needs to be shod with the desire

for something more than half truths and loose statements in the gathering of these facts, for invariably the person giving the information gives in proportion to the importance of the request as it exists in his own mind. One must often throw upon the mental screen of such a person a new conception of child-care before the facts wished for are forthcoming. Occasionally one may secure a full quota of evidence from one reference, but rarely does he find the person whose experience with the whole family has been so varied and whose judgment is so unbiased and discriminating that additional testimony is not needed; for, after all, the real value of testimony lies in having enough of it and it is the facts contributed by a group of persons that help weave the whole—facts that are weighed in the light of the personality, standards and judgment of each reference as well as his experience with the family.

KIND OF REFERENCES REQUIRED

Much depends upon having a group of well-chosen references, people who know the family from a variety of angles. It is desirable that all should not belong to the same social circle as the family. It is greatly to the advantage of the investigation when the names of references can be secured through a personal interview with the prospective foster mother, for much can be done to guide her in the making of a wise selection. The personal interview also gives opportunity to secure suggestions of possible sources of information unconsciously given. To depend upon an answered question form, no matter how elaborate, for the names of references leaves one quite at the mercy of the choice of the person who sends them. Under these circumstances the best he can do is so to shape the question form as to convey the idea of the type of

references desired, and include such questions as ask for former addresses and church membership. Former addresses, if of any duration, and particularly if outside of a city section, are invariably fruitful sources of information and through them, where the family have not transferred their church membership, one can get back to another local group. If in this way one good reference can be located, he in turn will invariably suggest some other reliable person if so requested.

To be obliged to interview most of the references by letter is another handicap, especially if the names of references have been secured through answered question forms and one knows little of what they represent. All sense of personal equation is lost. Make the letters as explicit as one may, he has no chance to get back of a spirit of indifference or misconception of the work and present his case. If, for instance, the majority of children throughout a section have been placed with little or no knowledge as to their physical condition, children with venereal diseases going into homes where there are other children, no doctor is likely to take seriously a written request for knowledge about health conditions in a prospective foster family. One must build up a large body of references throughout the territory used for placing—reliable people who can be interested and trained into an appreciation of what is needed in the way of information and who will, in response to letters of inquiry, secure the necessary facts from some authentic source if they themselves do not know the situation.

THE VISIT TO THE FOSTER HOME

The other essential portion of an investigation is the visit to the foster family. This should be made, whenever possible, after the references have

been interviewed, for the visitor should be free to give the family the mental assurance that they are acceptable if he is to produce an atmosphere congenial to the revealing of personal history. To be obliged to make the first contact with a family through a visit to their home restricts one greatly in the possibilities of touching these finer chords. The fact that he does not know what the family represents is prohibitive of that relaxed mental state that makes for confidence. In asking for references the family knows that it is yet to be tested and, although the most friendly feeling may prevail, there is bound to be a subconscious tension, for it is hardly fair to give the family an assurance of receiving children until more is known concerning them.

Where it is possible to have the first interview in the office, at which time the names of references are obtained or the application wholly eliminated, the way is left open for paying the home visits to only promising material and the visit thus freed for the closer contacts. One wants to know how life has affected the family and how they have taken it if he is really to know what they have to give to a child. One wants to know something of the environment in which the husband and wife, themselves, grew up: their traditions, their training, education and ambitions; the establishment of the new home; the training of their children; the man's share in the home life; their interests in other people's boys and girls; their contacts in the community; the breadth of their experience and how it has made for character and personality. To one who desires to sense the capacity of a home for shaping the life of a foster child this opportunity to gauge something of personal experiences will not seem like trespassing on family intimacies, for it

is never an end in itself. It is, to be sure, dealing in personalities and personal values but is strangely impersonal.

The home visit plays a vital part in interpreting the type of work the family is best fitted to do. A thoroughly good woman with an exaggerated idea of the divine right of parents may be just the person to bring certain children into line, but never the child who lacks confidence in his own ability. She may have done an excellent piece of work with her own boys and girls but one can hardly expect the majority of references to sense the situation from just the slant that one expects of a placing specialist. It is from the vantage ground of his specialized experience that he interprets and values foster home material, its possibilities and impossibilities, on the basis of facts gleaned from a number of sources.

There is something about the freedom of placing the child in an entirely new environment, with the opportunity to select new home material free from the flaws existent in the child's own home, that makes one somehow unconsciously search for the perfect home. One never quite relinquishes the search, always hoping at the next turn to find the home of his heart's desire, selecting, however, in the meantime from the imperfect human material that makes up the average imperfect community, homes that under the right touch, in spite of their imperfections, do marvelous work.

The majority of homes, even the best, have their liabilities as well as their assets, and in the selective process one must see to it that the liabilities do not fall too low, for there are certain fundamentals essential to each and every home accepted, without which it would be unwise to consider it for the task. Foster parents must be people who have personal character to

a greater or less degree; people who have a spiritual unity in their lives, who are facing life squarely and believe in their fellow men; people with good, native intelligence; people whose love has a touch of the universal and who can take to their hearts children who are in no way related to them. Their financial situation must be so that the home is not dependent upon the children's board or labor for maintenance. It is quite impossible to build up a family budget out of the board paid for children, as the rates go, and have anything left for the children. There should be good health conditions and a good environment—but character, as a rule, will satisfactorily shape the immediate environment.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS IN HOMES

The special qualifications needed in a home vary according to the type of work undertaken and according to whether the child is to remain for a shorter or longer period. The baby placed for adoption must have in his new home such qualities as can meet his needs when he reaches adolescence; whereas the baby placed for temporary care during the first year and a half of his life, may prosper quite beautifully with a woman of colorless personality or one lacking in force. The big, outstanding assets of the baby home are a passion for cleanliness and routine and an instinctive appreciation of the need of adjusting life to the baby; also a fine spirit of coöperation with the nurse and the doctor directing the child. When the mother of the baby is not married and visits the baby in the home, the foster mother must be one who will not unwisely guide the mother, for she will frequently turn to the foster mother for advice.

In the home for the little "runabouts," children from two to six years

of age, the essentials one wishes to see are a respect for the child's individuality and skill in training the child through ways of expression rather than repression. One wants a close, warm sympathy, an understanding of the need of routine as it relates to the child's physical needs and an appreciation of the wisdom of a simple, varied diet, a single bed in a room separate from his foster parents and plenty of out-of-door space for play.

The outstanding qualities in the home for the pre-adolescent and adolescent child are a sympathetic understanding that will lead him into some knowledge of self and his relation to the world of people about him, an ability to help in the readjustment of the child's life, when former environment has been against him—in short, the spirit which a good foster mother unconsciously expressed when she wrote to her boy's visitor: "Rejoice with me; Jack and I pulled down the last stone in the wall between us in our Sunday night talk and I now feel sure of the love and confidence of my boy. There are years of work in the gardening line—pulling up weeds and planting flowers—but I have accomplished the thing that is the foundation in a case like Jack's. He talks to me now and I have read a lot between the lines and that helps me in handling him. I find my bed-time talks are wonderful helps."

One needs sanity on the question of sex, a resourcefulness in developing interests and in establishing good neighborhood and community contacts, a wise balance between work and play. Such qualities are essential, whether board is paid for the child or whether by service in the home he earns the privilege of attending school, or gives all of his time in return for wages. It is not a question of economic status, but of the best development of the adolescent child.

A doctor's wife, with three small children of her own, considered taking into her family a girl of sixteen to assist in the home with the opportunity of attending school. The girl had lived for several years in an institution, but upon reaching her sixteenth birthday was expected to earn her own way. She was a good worker, but subject to periods of rather deep depression. In the doctor's family no separate room was to be provided for her. She was to use a room occupied by the family during the day, and no recreation, beyond that of attending school and Sunday school every other Sunday, was to be provided. This, the doctor's wife considered ample for any girl who was obliged to depend upon herself for support; indeed, if further provision had to be made she did not wish to consider her.

EFFICIENT SUPERVISION

The foster family that is finally accepted for service is precious material and, that it may become proficient in the work, should be shown every consideration by the organization directing the task, for working with someone else's child is far different from working with one's own. The difference in family background, inheritance, health, which often affects behavior, and early training throws the whole situation into a different setting. As one foster mother expressed it: "With our children it was a growth of years from their tiny babyhood. We never lied to them about anything and they just naturally didn't lie. There was so much in their training that we just did without reasoning it out and, beginning at the very beginning, there was

nothing to uproot. Thee sees, there was no problem about our children. By the time they were big enough to be fairly naughty they had learned not to be."

From the difference in setting there are bound to be storm and stress periods that call for the judgment of a person skilled in the art of adjusting human difficulties, who through the knowledge of many families and many children and, particularly, of the foster family and child in question, can sense the cause and release the tension. This he may accomplish through re-interpreting the child and his people to the foster family, rekindling their sympathy and realization that reëducation cannot come by leaps and bounds, or re-interpreting the family and the new life to the child or the child's relatives. This art of supervision calls for the expression of an appreciative understanding of all that the foster family are endeavoring to do and a contagious faith in their possibilities, which stimulates to further effort. Often the day is saved by the bit of humor, which does so much to illumine the situation for those who are living close to it, bringing to them new hope and courage. Effective supervision means so knowing each foster family and child through keeping closely in touch with them that by timely, definite suggestion many a difficulty may be forestalled and the family helped into attaining a grade of work that, unaided, would be to them an impossibility. Supervision is the crowning factor in developing foster home standards, for it takes, as it were, raw home material and through its creative touch helps to shape the seasoned product.